

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Original) A process for thickening a liquid or pourable product comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of 1:9 to 9:1 to form a fruit or vegetable mixture;
- iv) incorporating the fruit or vegetable mixture in the product to be thickened,

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits are selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of root vegetables, stem vegetables, leafstalk vegetables, bulb vegetables, immature flower vegetables, leaf vegetables, tuber vegetables, bud vegetables seed vegetables and mixtures thereof.

Claim 2 (Original) The process according to claim 1, wherein the first and the second portion are combined in a weight ratio from 2:8 to 8:2.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the first and the second portion are from the same vegetable or fruit species.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the PME-deactivation of step ii) is carried out by a hot break process.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit or vegetable mixture is incorporated in the product in an amount of 0.5 to 80% by weight based on the amount of the product.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the product is a food product.

Claim 7 (currently amended) A thickening agent comprising a fruit or vegetable mixture of two portions of one or more PME-comprising fruits or vegetables, said thickening agent being obtainable by a process comprising the steps of

- i) preparing a first and a second portion of the fruits or vegetables;
- ii) PME-deactivating the first portion;
- iii) combining the first and the second portion in a weight ratio of from 1:9 to 9:1 to form the fruit or vegetable mixture;

wherein the fruits or vegetables are comminuted at one or more of steps i)-iii), and wherein the fruits selected from bananas, apples, oranges, pineapples, edible berries, cherries or mixtures thereof and wherein the vegetables are selected from the group consisting of root vegetables, stem vegetables, leafstalk vegetables, bulb vegetables, immature flower vegetables, leaf vegetables, tuber vegetables, bud vegetables, seed vegetables and mixtures thereof; and further comprising

iv) at least one drying step; and

wherein said thickening agent is dry.

8-9. (canceled)

Claim 10 (Previously Presented) A method for reducing the perceived acidity of a product by incorporating into that product 0.5 to 95% by weight based on the weight of the product of the thickening agent according to claim 7.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented) A product comprising 0.5% to 95% by weight based on the product of the thickening agent according to claim 7.

Claim 12 (Original) The product according to claim 11 further comprising of from 0.5% to 50% by weight of edible salt.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented) The product according to claim 11 wherein the product is a food product.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented) The product according to claim 11, wherein the product is an emulsion.

Claim 15 (Original) The product according to claim 14, wherein the emulsion is an oil-in-water emulsion.